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ABSTRACT

This booklet documents the 1990 colloquium for Massachusetts superintendents, Leading the Way. The colloquium program is one of several initiatives of the School-Based Improvement Project (SBIP), which is a partnership between the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Office of Community Education of the Massachusetts Department of Education. The project seeks to build a professional-development support network among central-office administrators who are involved in school-based management. In the keynote address, "The Paradoxes of Decentralization," Jerome Murphy suggests that we need new images of leadership, that superintendents should promote the common good and utilize management by exception, and that the central office should play a supportive role. The four colloquia sessions address the following issues--communication, decision making, finances, and accountability. Discussion at each colloquium affirmed the centrality of superintendents' leadership in setting the tone for restructuring, providing support for increased creativity and responsibility, and ensuring educational improvement at the school building level. A list of presenters is included. (LMI)

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LEADING THE WAY

The Role of Superintendents in System Level Restructuring that Promotes School-Based Management

Documentation

of a

Superintendents' Leadership Colloquium

April 5, 1990

Co-sponsored by

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

and

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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Superintendents' Leadership Colloquium
April 5, 1990

Developed by

Office of the Commissioner
Community Education Office

Susan Freedman, Director
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Summer 1990

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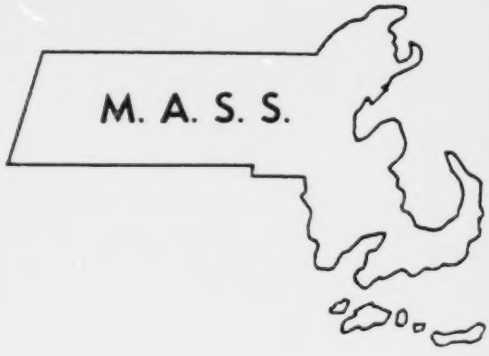

Dear Colleagues:

This booklet provides a documentation of the 1990 Colloquium for Superintendents, **Leading the Way,** that was held at Holy Cross College in Worcester. This Colloquium Program is one of several initiatives of the School-Based Improvement Project (SBIP), which is a partnership between the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Office of Community Education of the Massachusetts Department of Education. The goal of this project is to build a professional development support network of superintendents, and other central office administrators, who are involved in restructuring that supports effective school-based management.

Background

The SBIP offers a cohesive and comprehensive approach to providing superintendents with a range of professional development opportunities built around the theme of school restructuring. It includes **colloquia** with workshops and seminars, **support groups** that will enable small groups of superintendents to engage in problem solving and consultation on real-life applications of restructuring, **peer mentoring** for pairs of superintendents, and **pilot projects** that will serve as laboratories that produce "field-tested" models of replicable practices.

In 1989, SBIP engaged 100 Massachusetts school superintendents in exploring the concept of school-based management and its implications for the leadership role of superintendents. In a two-day conference, the participants arrived at two major conclusions:

1. Maintaining cohesion, in the face of the decentralization that is needed to make school-based management work, calls for more -- not less -- leadership on the part of superintendents.

2. Decentralization calls for different kinds of leadership. Superintendents and central office staff will need to exercise creative leadership in redesigning -- "restructuring" -- relationships and procedures that support school-based management.

Superintendents recommended to MASS and Office of Community Education SBIP organizers that they focus on these issues in further professional development activities.

The "Leading the Way" Colloquia

The four colloquia documented in this publication were designed to build on the 1989 conference and to respond to superintendents' suggestions that training events share replicable practices and strategies for school-based management. This four-session event was launched with a keynote

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address by Dr. Jerome Murphy of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who provided a vision of a new way of doing business for superintendents in school systems engaged in restructuring. The four colloquia that followed addressed the following issues: **communication, decision making, finances, and accountability.**

In each colloquium, the focus was on key organizational questions such as:

- Who makes which **decisions,** and at what level?
- How can schools be given increased **discretion over their resources** in order to practice effective school-based management?
- What **accountability measures** can ensure that school-based management results in the responsible exercise of autonomy?

As is indicated in this documentation, discussion at each colloquium affirmed the centrality of superintendents' leadership in setting the tone for restructuring, providing support for increased creativity and responsibility, and ensuring educational improvement at the school building level.

Upcoming Professional Development Programs for Superintendents

Through the generosity of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, which has recently funded a joint proposal submitted by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Office of Community Education of the Massachusetts Department of Education, the School-Based Improvement Project will be implementing a four-year program of activities designed to enhancing superintendents' leadership. Superintendents will have opportunities to participate in colloquia, support groups, peer mentoring programs, and pilot projects that comprise a coordinated, developmental approach to professional development. The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and the Office of Community Education will be informing superintendents of these programs over the next four years and we look forward to working with superintendents to make these projects responsive and relevant to their needs.

Sincerely,

Dennis DiSalvo, President
Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

Susan Freedman

Susan Freedman, Director
Office of Community Education
Massachusetts Department of Education

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: The Paradoxes of Decentralization

SPEAKER: Jerome Murphy, Associate Dean, Harvard Graduate School of Education

FOCUS:

The changing world of the superintendent with school-based management. The paradoxes of decentralization and how these underscore the importance of the superintendent's leadership.

HIGHLIGHTS:

I have been asked to speculate about the changing role of superintendents in a world of school-based management and about what the job might look like in the future with school-based management. My suggestions are based on a puzzle, a belief, and a prediction. Let me say a word about each of these before I talk about what I see as the changing world of the superintendent.

The puzzle: Why is it that school superintendents have basically been ignored in much of the discussion about school reform?

If you look at the reform reports, going back all the way to "A Nation at Risk," which came out seven years ago this month, there is virtually nothing written about "the role of the school superintendent." This was true for the first reform report and it has been true in almost every report that has followed. If you look at all the attention paid to President Bush's Education Summit last September, and if you read the reports that came out of it -- as many of you have done you will not find in them any discussion of the role of the school superintendent. In my view, the school superintendent has really been the forgotten player in the game of school reform. This is a real puzzle because I see superintendents playing an absolutely key role in reform.

The belief: School-based management is a very good idea.

It's clearly not a panacea. It's got to work along with other reforms. But it's a very good idea. During the twentieth century, American public schools have been remarkably successful. They deserve much more credit than they are currently getting and they are a lot better than their reputation among the public. But having said this, their level of performance is far behind that which is required for the future. There is a growing gap between the performance of the schools and our expectations. It's not that the schools are getting worse. It's that the level of expectations for the schools is growing much more quickly than the schools are getting better and we need to find ways

to close that gap. We need schools that recognize that children are different and that organizations are different. We need to find ways to match our pedagogy and the organization of schools to these differences. We need schools that are more adaptable, experimental, and willing to make mistakes. We need school-based management.

We also need more schools that are dedicated not only to student learning but also to organizational learning. All of this will require more initiative, risk taking, and operational discretion by the people who are closest to the action, that is, the people in the schools. This is the hallmark of school-based management.

In my view, school-based management is not an end in itself, but it's an effective means to an end. It is a tool that, if used properly, enhances both student learning and organizational learning.

The prediction: School-based management will really catch on and there may be a backlash.

If school-based management does catch on, it is headed for a crash landing unless superintendents play a crucial and central role in its implementation. In short, superintendents have a key role to play in decentralization and, in particular, in school-based management.

During the next ten years, the advocates of decentralization are going to grow in power. They are going to convince the public that the centralization of schools and the rules, regulations, and bureaucracy have gone too far; bottom-up management is the key to reform.

There are four mutually reinforcing trends: school-based management, shared decision making, teacher empowerment, and restructuring. Each reinforces the other, and you can be sure that all are going to catch on. In that context, many superintendents, feeling a lot of pressure, are going to pull back and simply reduce controls. The schools will be run without the benefit of an appropriate role for the superintendent. School districts will become, to use a term coined by the sociologist Gerald Grant, "radically decentralized." Let me further predict that by the year 2000, ten years from now, after this new vision is in place, we are going to see a brand new battery of critics and there is going to be one giant backlash against all these efforts toward school-based management.

What the critics will be saying is that decentralization has gone much too far: School districts have become fragmented; they have lost their sense of central purpose; and there are growing disparities in school resources, teacher quality, and student results. The critics will argue that the strong

schools have gotten stronger and the weak schools have gotten weaker. Inevitably, they are going to find some scandals and abuse.

Even more inevitably, we will find politicians and the media looking at the situation and being appalled at the absence of simple controls and oversight -- the very things that earlier reformers wanted to get rid of ten years before. The pendulum will then swing back and we will move toward more centralization of the schools.

The paradox of decentralization

Can my predicted backlash be avoided? My tentative answer is, "Yes." It will require a different way of thinking about decentralization and centralization and it will require us to think not in terms of **either** centralization or decentralization, but **both.** Avoiding the backlash will require us to forge what might be called a synthesis of opposites. We will have to figure out how to do decentralization and centralization at the same time. I'm not talking about the pendulum moving from centralization over to decentralization and then moving back to the middle ground. I'm suggesting that we need to think about two pendulums, with one stuck on decentralization and the other stuck on centralization.

The paradox of decentralization is that it is highly dependent upon the existence of centralization. School-based management, in my view, requires forceful central action from the superintendent's office. This central action has to be different from what it has been in the past. This is particularly true for large school districts -- for highly bureaucratized school districts in cities.

Superintendents have a crucial role to play in promoting the good of the whole. It is important to promote the vitality of individual schools, but it is equally important to promote the common good of the school district.

Superintendents will also have to play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining the "political space" which will be required for school experimentation and the un-intended mistakes and foul-ups which accompany experimentation. Superintendents will also have a crucial role to play in managing the tension which is inevitably created by embracing the pursuit of opposites -- by pursuing, at the same time, centralization and decentralization. The resulting tension and conflict will need to be embraced, rather than suppressed, because out of this conflict you will get improvement of the schools. To accomplish this improvement, we need a new way of thinking in superintendents' offices in at least four areas.

New images of leadership

First, we need **new images** of what it means to be a strong superintendent and new images of leadership and who exercises it. The conventional view is that the superintendent is **the** leader. We still have a yearning for the superintendent to be a heroic, visionary, take-charge kind of expert at the top. The superintendent wields power and persuades others to follow his vision. The conventional view was captured in a recent **Wall Street Journal** editorial on school superintendents. This editorial stated that the ideal superintendent is a no-nonsense, rather shrewd, tough guy. "The days of superintendents who act like Mr. Chips are over," said the **Wall Street Journal.** Welcome, instead, a new breed of superintendents with nicknames like "Hacksaw," "Bonecrusher," and "the Terminator." I clearly don't want to discount the importance of exercising power, having a sense of direction, making tough decisions, or "hacksawing" your way through the bureaucracy. However, I believe that this hacksaw image, by itself, simply won't work.

It particularly won't work when school systems become more professionalized and devolve more authority to the local level. In this context, you need some less heroic, gentler images of what it means to be an effective superintendent.

Images such as:

- Superintendents who not only advocate their personal vision but who also work with others, often off-stage, to develop a shared vision and to find the common ground.

- Superintendents who not only enunciate answers but who persistently ask the right questions -- always focusing attention on the needs of children.

- Superintendents who not only persuade, but who also listen carefully and consult widely before making decisions.

- Superintendents who not only wield power, but who also depend on others and motivate action through genuine caring, commitment, and trust.

- Superintendents who not only exercise leadership, but who also nurture leadership throughout the organization.

In these images of leadership, effective superintendents are constantly struggling to combine opposites: to be tough and to be gentle; to be heroic and to be unheroic; to be a leader and to be a follower. Again, the basic argument is

that it's not **either/or** but **both.** This view requires a shift in the thinking about leaders and heros. It recognizes that leadership is separate from the administrative position. The real heros and leaders are not the single "Lone Ranger" superintendents at the top of the organization. The real heros and leaders are the network of professionals throughout the organization who exercise their energies and efforts to improve things for children.

Superintendents and the institutionalization of precarious values

My second suggestion is that superintendents will need to spend a lot more time **promoting the common good.** They will need to do this in order to overcome the by-products of decentralization which can include fragmentation, loss of cohesion, inequality, and the inevitable foul-ups that go along with the exercise of discretion. In promoting the common good, superintendents need to rely less on heavy handed rules and regulations and more on what has been called the "institutionalization of precarious values."

The "institutionalization of precarious values" means that superintendents need to identify and articulate the core values which inspired their organizational goals. The Honda Corporation, which is now generally recognized as the single best-managed organization in the world, has developed the "Honda Way," which includes a set of core values that are constantly reinfored. The core values for workers at Honda are: "learn," "think," "analyze," "evaluate," and "improve." Honda believes that a coherent mission and set of core values, that are shared by those units of the organization that are closest to the action, i.e., production workers, will help guide local decisions about what ought to be done. The core values will serve to promote unity as opposed to fragmentation.

A related notion is that political overseers, boards of education and others with political power within school districts, are primarily interested in seeing that the district has a sense of direction and that success is taking place on a regular basis. When those who enjoy discretionary authority exhibit core values in their practices, they are being responsive to the legitimate concerns of the political overseers. This responsiveness can help generate political tolerance for experimentation, variation, and mistakes.

New roles for central administration staff

A third suggestion is that superintendents need to think differently about how to use their **central office staff** (if you still, after Prop 2 1/2, have central office staff!) and shift from the orientation of an enforcement agency with

auditors to a service orientation with facilitators. This shift assumes that schools can be trusted and that teachers and principals have access to crucial information that's needed in making the right decisions that serve kids.

Schools, teachers, and principals need more **assistance** not more **policing.** The superintendent's office should help build the capacity of schools to take advantage of decentralization in school-based management. The role of the central office is to provide training and technical assistance aimed at helping staff at the schools use their new-found freedom to figure out how to respond to various issues and problems. It does little good to release schools from the yoke of central control if they lack the capacity to figure out how to take advantage of it.

Management by exception

My final suggestion is that superintendents need to think differently about how to solve **day-to-day managerial problems.** They need to rely less on uniform standards, with rules and regulations, and more on what's been called "management by exception." Under "management by exception" superintendents' offices would focus their managerial resources on the "exceptions" to normal, smooth functioning in the schools.

In practice, this approach might mean that most schools would be left alone by the central office. In other cases, attention would be focused on those schools that are having the most problems. The type of attention would vary with the diagnosis of the pathology. In some cases, the pathology can be addressed by technical assistance. In other cases, "management by exception" will involve additional staff, consultation, joint problem solving, persuasion, and even the use of sanctions.

"Management by exception" is an effective way to deploy limited central office resources, particularly as those resources dwindle. It also is an effective way to minimize the foul-ups that are associated with experimentation, variation, and deregulation.

Conclusion: Four key questions about implementation

In conclusion, some difficult questions about implementation:

Question 1: In today's highly politicized school districts, particularly in cities where nobody is in charge and where everybody is in charge, can superintendents define core values which build coherence and commitment while not undermining the diversity of legitimate interests? I think the answer is "Yes."

Question 2: Can we attract and train the best and the brightest to become superintendents and to take on these new roles and responsibilities, particularly in school districts which are the poorest and the hardest to lead? Can we do this in today's Massachusetts, with its current fiscal austerity, the accompanying meanness of spirit, and the apparent breakdown of the pursuit of the common good? Yes we can, because we must. It is essential for superintendents to be heroic in rekindling the pursuit of the common good.

Question 3: Can we develop new forms of accountability that are politically acceptable, professionally sound, and allow our schools freedom in exchange for positive student results? I think that "accountability" is the Achilles heel of the movement toward school-based management.

Question 4: Can we rekindle public trust in the schools? Without more public trust, educators can not exercise the judgement, take the risks, and make the mistakes that these more flexible strategies of school leadership require.

If we can find answers to these vexing questions, and if decentralization can be accompanied by the centralizing, coherence-building strategies of superintendents, the many benefits of school autonomy might well be achieved by holding in check all of the forces toward fragmentation. Perhaps even my predicted backlash might be avoided. When the next education summit is held in the gardens of President Quayle, there may even be some recognition of that forgotten, but crucial, player in the game of school reform: the school superintendent!

COLLOQUIUM 1. COMMUNICATION: building support for the value of school-based management among school constituencies.

Presenter: Irwin Blumer, Superintendent, Newton Public Schools

FOCUS:

- The superintendent's role as a communicator and vision-builder
- Articulating school-based management as a core value
- The superintendent's role in modeling the concept of shared decision-making

HIGHLIGHTS:

The purpose of school-based management

The purpose of school-based management or of any school restructuring is to improve instruction. School-based management is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

School-based management is not for everyone. Some people do not know how to share power, yet they run good school systems. If you are a good leader, but not good at sharing power, leave this approach alone. It's essential that superintendents know who they are and if they are capable of sharing authority.

Some definitions of school-based management

School-based management means:

- Central administrators work with school-level administrators in shared leadership.
- Central administrators set goals and allow leaders at the individual school buildings to grow as they strive to meet these goals.
- Empowering others, allowing them to make decisions, and collaborating with them in problem solving.
- Placing accountability closer to the individuals who deliver services; the classroom is the real focus of responsibility.

- Creating a spirit of collegiality that engenders collective responsibility for a set of shared values and a shared sense of direction.

- Getting rid of the "we-they" mentality that can exist between central administration and the school staff.

- Involving parents and students in all aspects of school life.

School-based management does not mean:

Everyone doing his or her own thing. It does not mean 19 different schools doing 19 different things.

Authority, autonomy, and school-based management

Authority is a central issue with school-based management. Two key questions to ask are: How can it be shared? Is the superintendent, as the chief executive, capable of sharing authority?

Schools must be granted the **autonomy** needed to make the basic changes in the **authority relationship** between central office and the schools. Autonomy is needed if restructuring is to occur.

Autonomy must co-exist with allegiance to the core values if the autonomous units are to remain a school system.

Role of the superintendent

Superintendents under a system of school-based management should develop the core values for the school system and establish a process that ensures that these values are implemented through shared ownership in these values.

Developing shared ownership depends on the ability of the leader to communicate the vision in a way that reaches out to people, grips them, and makes them want to become involved in carrying out the vision.

Core values and the superintendent

Does the superintendent have the right to unilaterally define the philosophy - the core values - of the school system?

Yes, she/he has the right and the responsibility. Superintendents should be appointed to this position on the basis of these core values. For example, when I applied for my current position in Newton, I met with a broad based team as part of the interview process. At that point, I told the team that I would promote my three core values:

1. Centrality of the classroom: The most important thing that occurs in a school system takes place in the classroom between teachers and students. This is where the real work of the school goes on. Everything we do must support this work.

2. Respect for Human Differences.

3. Collegiality.

Does this mean that the role of a superintendent is to come in and get others to buy into the core values?

Yes, but it does not happen unilaterally. You cannot send out core values in a memo. It takes interaction; it takes dialogue; it takes time. Do not underestimate the force of time. It can take 5 to 8 years, because the inculcation of core values means that you are building a new culture.

How does a culture get created?

The inculcation of core values develops through three stages.

1. The superintendent needs to articulate her/his **non-negotiables** -- "the things that are most important to me."

2. Dialogue and interaction must be used to create the culture in which the core values can grow and mature.

   - Meet frequently with administrators and teachers to discuss issues and solve problems - always through the prism of the core values.

   - Hold discussions and joint problem-solving sessions in which the superintendent models the core values.

   - Be open to dialogue. It is important for principals, for example, to know that they can disagree with the superintendent at a public meeting. Creating an environment in which these disagreements can be aired is part of the challenge of developing leadership in others.

3. Organizational routines are created to embody concretely the core values so that everyone involved practices them. Two examples from Newton:

Core value	Practice
Collegiality	All administrators meet together with the superintendent every week for two hours. This was a new practice in the system and at first was resisted. Each school is charged with promoting collegiality. This is one of the non-negotiable elements of the core values. However, the ways in which each school practices and promotes collegiality are left up to the school. This is the autonomy that comes with school-based management.
Respect for Human Differences	Analyses of achievement tests and other student performance measures are consistently undertaken in order to assess how well Newton is serving its Afro-American students. When the data showed that these students were not achieving at the level of other students, the system hired staff to improve the performance of these students.

These examples provide only a sampling of the many ways in which core values can be practiced and modelled. Other "places" in which core values are practiced include:

- Classrooms
- Cafeteria
- Playground
- Faculty meetings
- Grouping practices
- Model lessons
- Curriculum materials
- Spontaneous personal contacts

An indicator of success in inculcating core values

You know that core values have taken root when other constituencies use them to advance matters that are important to them.

If you ask teachers what is important to them, they will say "the evaluation process." The teachers' association recently negotiated to add a new criterion to teachers' evaluation forms: "How well does the classroom teacher do in developing respect for human difference?"

Clearly this core value has become institutionalized in Newton.

COLLOQUIUM 2 - DECISION MAKING: Decentralizing authority and promoting community participation

Presenter: Peter J. Negroni, Superintendent, Springfield Public Schools

FOCUS:

- The role of the superintendent as a change-agent in restructuring school governance
- The Springfield Public School system's current restructuring initiative as a case example of the change process

HIGHLIGHTS:

School-Based Management is a Means to an End

In Springfield, we see school-based management not as the answer but as a process for getting to the answer. The process consists of empowering those closest to the teaching and learning process. We have learned from industry, and some school systems, that when you involve people in the process of change and in making decisions about what they do, you will be more successful. When you make the school responsible for its own destiny, you will be more successful.

An Overview of Restructuring in Springfield

We are trying to design a situation in which the school unit is fully responsible for educating its children. The process is in its first year and began with a "Talking Paper," a **Blueprint for Excellence.**

The Blueprint established four Task Forces that are working on system level issues: central administration, restructuring, curriculum, and effective schools management. Each Task Force is composed of approximately fifty people and includes central office personnel, principals, teachers, parents, business people and other citizens.

In addition, site-based management teams were established at each school. Over time, these teams will be the main governance structures in the Springfield school system.

Site-Based Teams

Composition: The site-based teams range in size from 10 to 20 people and represent all of the constituencies at the

school, including parents. In addition, each team contains a representative from the business community and a liaison from the central office.

Membership selection: We have learned from our process that teachers should elect the teacher members of the team; parents should elect the parents. It is not effective to have principals select the team members since they may select only those who support their point of view.

Internal Operations: Each team functions differently, but all have a facilitator whom they elect from among themselves. Some, but not all, teams have elected the principal. The agenda is set by the members of the team. Minutes are kept of every meeting and are shared with the superintendent.

Functions: Each team gathers information from the school community on school needs and on ideas for improvement. Teams also make broad decisions about how the school should operate within the context of the school's Education Plan. The preparation of the Plan is one of the most important functions of the team. The Plan, which must be approved by the superintendent, sets standards of expectation for the school community. It states what the school expects to achieve during the coming year. At the end of the year, each school reports at a public meeting on what it accomplished as compared to what it promised.

We model this approach to accountability at the system level. The school committee and the superintendent also develop a plan and report to the public on how well we met our goals.

Authority: The authority given to each team varies from school to school. Generally, each team gets the authority that it asks for and power is decentralized as needed. One team has asked for and been granted the ability to hire and fire. The superintendent needs to be ready to share the responsibility and recognize when people are ready to assume it.

Implementation Issues

1. Changing the central office is necessary but difficult

It takes new kinds of organizations to set out new mandates and assist local schools in implementing them. Our first task was to ask: "What should our central administration look like if we have a new vision and new mission for the school system?" While it is easy to talk about change at an organizational level, it is very hard to talk about change in human beings. The members of the task force that is restructuring the

central office are struggling with the challenge of developing a new structure. Through this process they are coming face-to-face with the implications of a range of structural arrangements, some of which may put some people out of their jobs.

2. Change occurs at different rates

Do not expect everyone to "come-on-board" and all teams to be at the same place at the same time. Be accepting of differences. The superintendents' role is to help people change and understand why they are not changing. People ask me: "At what point should we be now?" I tell them: "At the point you are ready to be."

The superintendent's role can be to help school-based teams identify and celebrate their successes. Also, it helps to build-in small successes so that people begin to see results.

3. Fiscal decentralization can be threatening

In the past, site-based teams have been given responsibility without control over the money needed to discharge these responsibilities. In Springfield we offered teams control over their schools' money. Many teams, however, said that they didn't want the responsibility for making hiring and firing decisions. Because some teams were not ready to make such decisions, we had to be flexible and adjust to the conditions of the moment.

4. The ambiguities of power sharing

Principals report that the biggest impediment to doing their job is that they don't have the power. As superintendent, I "anoint" them with power and tell them that as I am sharing my power they must share theirs with teachers and parents. It can take awhile for some administrators to become accustomed to operating in a climate of shared decision making.

Role of the Superintendent

1. Create the dynamic for change

The challenge in restructuring is to move the dynamics in such a way that the "engine" of school change and reform is moving so quickly that it can't be stopped. In Springfield we have tried to "rev-up" that engine with such speed that nobody will dare get in front of it.

2. **Keep asking the right questions to sustain the dynamics for change**

There are two questions that you have to keep asking in order to keep things moving:

"Why are we doing what we do?" If the only answer is "because that's the way we've always done it," it is time to change what we do.

The other is, "If we don't like the structure that we have, why do we have it?" Often the answer is that "the rules and regulations force us to have this structure that no one likes."

The role of the superintendent can be to push teams to find the intent behind rules and regulations. When people understand that rules and regulations are vehicles for getting to certain outcomes, such as desegregated school systems, they begin to consider other approaches for reaching the same ends. They become freed from the burden of working under rules and regulations that are impeding productive change.

3. **Identify your bottom lines and set the parameters for discretion**

Granting vague and open-ended decision making authority can be anxiety-producing rather than empowering. If the schools in the system do not know the superintendent's core values, they will be immobilized rather than mobilized for change.

In Springfield, the core values include a passion for school improvement, a belief in the research-based model of the effective school, and the process of site-based management for arriving at the effective school. While these values are not negotiable, everyone can be involved in negotiations about **how** to implement these values.

4. **Model the philosophy that you are preaching**

We are trying to act at the central office in the same way that we say schools should act. This is a new role because the central office is used to thinking that its job is to tell people that "this is what you should be doing" and then check that they are doing it. We now are setting broad goals and then asking individual schools: "How are you going to meet these goals?" "How can we help you?"

5. **Communicate the vision behind the restructuring initiative.**

The **Blueprint for Excellence** was sold to the community through over one hundred public presentations. We went on television. We talked to anybody, anywhere.

6. **Use the media**

We spent a lot of time meeting with the editors of the newspapers and representatives of other media. I have engaged them in the process, which has meant giving them access to news before it happens. The press, because it has enjoyed ongoing information, has not written one negative story since we've started.

7. **Mediate the inevitable disputes that arise when you democratize school governance**

"Democracy" means that more than one person makes a decision and that means that disputes are always possible.

The site-based teams use a democratic, consensus style of decision making. The principals do not have veto power or any other special prerogatives regarding the decisions of the team. When the principal and the team disagree, both have the right to appeal to the superintendent. In processing those appeals it is useful to act like a coach rather than an arbitrator. For example, when a principal told me that he wanted to do something and everybody else on the team was against it, I suggested that he stop and ask himself why everybody but he was against it? I also suggested that before coming to me, he should be prepared with lots of ammunition to prove his point of view.

8. **Take risks**

It is often easier to get forgiveness than to get permission. If I did not operate on this premise, I would spend a lot of time waiting for approval. As superintendents, we have to take chances and begin to take some risks to do what is right.

Conclusion: Some premises for successful change

First premise: It is very important to adopt the "no-fault insurance policy." No one is at fault for what exists: not the teachers, not the parents, not the kids, not the principals. We must make it clear that something is wrong without saying, "This is your fault."

Second premise. Do not believe that you, as a superintendent, are going to change anything alone. The people who will change things are the people who work with you -- I say **with** you, **not** for you -- and the people in the community. Any superintendent who is interested in change has to engage the community in the process of change.

Third premise. Inclusiveness is crucial. If you leave anyone out, you are in trouble. We left some people out. We made mistakes. But when they knocked on the door, we let them in. Restructuring means foregoing our normal strategies of containment, strategies that exclude rather than include. You must always ask: "Who's schools are these anyway?" The answer is: "The schools belong to everybody." Inclusiveness means that everyone has a role to play in school improvement and school change.

Fourth premise: Involvement is the core concept of school-based management. Don't try to do it alone; involve your parents and your community.

COLLOQUIUM 3. FINANCES: New systems of resource allocation that support school-based management

Presenter: Oliver S. Brown, Senior Management Consultant, Municipal and School Business Officials' Cooperative Corporation

FOCUS:

- The implications of "lump-sum" allocations and program budgeting for schools
- Giving school-based staff the discretion to accomplish their decision-making objectives
- Aligning school improvement planning, school program budgeting, and school program assessment

HIGHLIGHTS:

Language often gets in the way of reform. The way we talk about the school and the way we structure budgets -- line items, object-codes -- can be impediments to realizing the potential of school-based management.

For example:

- We used to have "principal teachers." The term evolved to "school building principals" and, most recently, to "building level managers." "School Principal" is the right term for the concept.
- The language of reform uses a term like "school site" as if the school, the "site," was primarily a piece of real estate. A school is a group of students, a faculty, and other staff under the leadership of a principal. The faculty of a school shares in its governance.

There is a similar disparity when it comes to budget making. The language that teachers and administrators use in talking about their program and resource needs is different from the language of the budget categories.

For example: Many school budgets include a category called "instructional services." This category generally includes teachers' salaries, school administrators' salaries, teachers' aides, specialists in areas such as reading, science, art, etc., tutors, and others who assist and support classroom teachers. Discussions about this budget category are likely to sound as though they are referring to inanimate "services" rather than to "people." Using the programmatic categories such as English, math, etc., instead of the budget categories, can help to clarify these

discussions. The present budget categories come from the annual report to the state. It is as if a corporation designed its budgeting, accounting, and reporting structure solely on the basis of the categories used in its Federal tax return.

Suggestion: Under a system of school-based management, the school team should develop its school budget in program terms. Program development, budget making, and program assessment can then be aligned. There are computer programs that can make the translation from language used in everyday discussion to state or local budget vocabulary.

Lump-Sum Budgeting

What is it?

Lump-sum budgeting describes the process by which schools get an equitable and fair annual appropriation of monies, regardless of their past spending history. Within this "lump" of money, individual schools enjoy wide discretion in allocating these funds to support their educational and other programs.

How is "lump-sum" different from "normal" budgeting practices?

In many school systems, individual schools enjoy opportunities to provide bottom-up input into the construction of the final district budget. The input is limited, however, to choices within line items that are predetermined. For example, teachers are often told, "you have x number of dollars to spend on curriculum materials. Look in the catalog and tell us what you would like." Under lump-sum budgeting, the entire school community is free to decide that they would rather, this year, spend more on staff development and less on curriculum materials in order to meet the systemwide goal of improving students' academic performance.

What is the educational rationale?

Lump-sum budgeting provides each school with increased flexibility to support activities and programs that address the schools system's priority goals as well as the unique needs of a particular school. By increasing flexibility, lump-sum budgeting promotes creativity among the school's teachers. It also increases the faculty's and school administration's accountability for results.

What is the fiscal rationale?

Lump-sum budgeting promotes equity and cost-effectiveness.

Lump-sum budgets, when determined by a formula rather than the level of last year's expenditure at each school, are more equitable across schools. Under the traditional method of constructing school budgets that is used in many systems, the following kinds of inequities occur:

- Schools whose principals are more effective in internally lobbying get more funds.

- Schools with a history of higher past expenditures are likely to be "facilities-rich" and to get larger allocations to support their facilities. Example: A school with a grassy playing field will have a history of higher maintenance expenses than will a school with no grass. Perpetuating these historic spending trends contributes to inequalities among schools.

Lump-sum budgeting creates incentives to economize because under-spending in one line item creates a cost-savings dividend that schools can use to supplement other programs or to initiate new programs. Because of the flexibility provided by the lump-sum, there is less temptation to spend every dollar in each line item.

How does lump-sum budgeting work?

Under lump-sum budgeting, equitable **allocations** of funds are sent down to the school; **budgets** come up from the school. The allocation sets the level of spending. The budget describes the priorities that determine spending levels within the line items that divide up the allocation.

The allocation is set by a formula and given to the school with an explanation for how the formula was developed. This formula will generally contain three major elements:

1. Allocations for staff:

   A formula for this element could read:

   "1 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) teaching position per N number of pupils"

   "1 FTE aide for each 200 students"

   "1 principal for each school and one assistant principal for each school with over 500 students.

2. Allocations for "other" cost items

   The formula could indicate:

   "Funds for non-personnel and non-maintenance expenses are calculated at N number of dollars per

pupil, per class, per teacher, or per school, depending on the item."

3. Parameters, or guidelines, that set limits on the discretion each school has in making trade-offs between "staff" and "other" line-item expenses, and among the items in the "other" categories.

   These guidelines can be more or less permissive. With permissive guidelines a school may choose, for example, not to fund one of the administrative positions for which it is entitled in the appropriation formula and instead use these monies for curriculum enrichment or staff development. This situation may occur when teachers and the principal feel that, through the creation of a team, the functions of the administrative position could be met without spending money on an administrative position. In this example, the teachers are making a trade-off: the extra effort on their part, needed to make the team concept work, is worth the dividend of additional curriculum materials or professional development opportunities.

   Under less permissive guidelines, the school would be able to develop any staffing pattern it chose, including the substitution of a team for an administrative position. It could not, however, transfer monies allocated for staff to other uses.

Some potential pitfalls and safeguards

1. **Pitfall:** School principals may be tempted to use their discretion within the staff position line items to eliminate a specific staff person because of, for example, a personality conflict without going through the more direct, formal termination process. The principal would be able to place a different person in that position if it were reinstated in the school's budget for a subsequent year.

   Safeguard: Establish a guideline that "any staff position that is eliminated in one year cannot be reinstated for three years."

2. **Pitfall:** School-level discretion over budgeting may risk sacrificing the core values of a school system.

   Safeguard: Systems can specify certain "must offer" requirements such as: "Art will be provided x number of times a week." Position allocations must be used to meet these requirements or alternative plans to meet this requirement must be submitted and approved.

3. **Pitfall:** There may be a temptation to defer maintenance in order to fund program enrichment.

   Safeguard: Include "hold harmless" or "can't touch" rules in the guidelines. For certain line items, current year allocations must be at least equal to last year's expenditures.

Planning and participation as safeguards

The most effective safeguards and forces for accountability result when school level budgetmaking is **goal oriented** as well as an open and participatory process.

To ensure this open process:

1. Tie the annual budget for each school to an annual updating of a school level Educational Improvement Plan. The school budget should be a financial expression of that Improvement Plan.

   This Educational Improvement Plan:

   - Incorporates the school system's core values and addresses the unique circumstances of each individual school.
   - Drives the budget. The priorities of the Plan rule the trade-off decisions that each school will have to make, and will be allowed to make, under a lump-sum allocation system.
   - Is open to a formal public hearing and review process, as is the school-based budget.
   - Is developed by a Team whose members represent the key constituents and stakeholders of the school community, including parents.

2. Require that the school's budget also be developed by a Team; possibly the same Team that develops the Plan.

   Having a representative Team with multiple perspectives responsible for developing the school's budget provides a safeguard similar to the "must offer" or "can't touch" rules described above.

   When the Team is committed to making decisions by consensus, the checks and balances of the democratic process results in outcomes that reflect "must offer" priorities.

3. Present, explain and defend the school's budget at a formal public hearing.

Role of the Superintendent and of Central Administration

1. Be very clear and explicit about the rules of the game.

   - Set out the rationale for the allocation formula explicitly and in writing.

   - Be clear about the guidelines that constrain how much discretion is and is not available. These guidelines include systemwide goals and objectives, a staffing allotment formula, non-salary rates and factors, the budget process (tasks, deadline dates, etc.), and procedures for dealing with exceptions to the above.

2. Be open to the outcomes of a school-based budgeting process but be firm and clear about the due process that schools are to follow. At a minimum, the due process requirements will stress:

   - Alignment between each school's Educational Improvement Plan, its budget, and its assessment and reporting procedures.

   - Opportunities for public hearings and comments on both the plan and the budget.

   - Participatory, rather than unilateral, decision making about each school's improvement plan and budget.

3. Serve as a resource and facilitator to the school-based planning and budgeting process.

   - Encourage each school to organize and describe its budget in program terms or terms that the school team generally uses to discuss and define its resource needs. In other words, do not require educators to become accountants. Use the expertise of central administration staff and of central computer facilities to translate the vocabulary of schools' budgets into line items required by municipal and state accounting standards.

   - Provide a "coaching" rather than directing service for school principals.

     The coaching metaphor is appropriate for superintendents. Under a system of school-based management with lump-sum funding, principals will have to learn how to make trade-off decisions to maximize the use of limited resources to achieve school improvement. They also will need to learn to build constituency support for those decisions.

Superintendents have a great deal of experience in this area that they can draw on for their role as "coach!"

COLLOQUIUM 4. ACCOUNTABILITY: Planning for results

Presenter: Lyle Kirtman, President, Future Management Systems

FOCUS:

- Planning models that promote accountability based on results rather than on adherence to rules.
- Strategic planning that integrates all levels of the school system and produces school level results that reflect systemwide values while addressing the unique needs and aspirations of each individual school.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Strategic planning: a definition

The key word is "strategy." A strategy in a game like chess or checkers is a planned series of moves designed to get you to where you want to be. The strategy is developed by first identifying where you want to be at the end. All moves are influenced by this initial decision.

In similar sense, a strategic plan begins with a definition of where the school system wants to be at a certain point in time. It begins with a vision of the school system's **position** at some future time.

The concept of "positioning" is central to the practice of strategic planning, in business and in education.

In business, this concept means being able to anticipate what the market will look like in the future and "positioning" the firm in order to take advantage of the opportunities and the challenges of the market of tomorrow.

In education, "positioning" means anticipating the environment of tomorrow -- its new needs and expectations -- and envisioning what the school system will need to do to respond to this environment.

Strategic planning calls for a school to identify the factors that will be critical in responding to the needs of the future and the position in which the school wants to be in regard to these factors. A comparison of the discrepancy between where the school is now and where it wants to be will identify the gaps to be filled. The task is then to identify the actions that will provide the "key results" that will bring the system closer to where it wants to be.

Need for strategic planning

Strategic planning is especially needed in a turbulent and rapidly changing environment. Some of the environmental factors that call for strategic planning are listed below.

1. External pressures

    - o Consumerism of parents
    - o Competition from private schools
    - o Rapid pace of change
    - o Fiscal crisis and uncertainty
    - o Expectations of expanded roles for schools, i.e., coordinating human services for the "whole child"
    - o Businesses' concerns about the quality of our workforce in light of international competition

2. Internal pressures

    - o Need to react to the decline in student performance
    - o Expansion of the knowledge base and its impact on curriculum and instruction
    - o Diversity of students
    - o Organizational complexity

Strategic planning in relationship to school-based management

In general, the value of a strategic plan is that it creates a context for problem solving and decision making. Systems that are guided by a strategic plan will, for each problem, seek and pick that solution that improves its "positioning."

For school systems that are undergoing decentralized decision making, a strategic plan:

1. Provides cohesion by having all schools share in an explicit vision of the future for the whole school system.

2. Promotes accountability by focusing attention on the "key results," the outcomes that all levels of the school system are pledged to meet.

Cambridge: One community's experience with planning.

1. **Need**

    The Superintendent in Cambridge felt the need for a more proactive approach to decision making and a more comprehensive approach to problem solving. He found that individual, one by one, solutions to problems did not provide forward momentum to school improvement. He

was also concerned that the "tail was wagging the dog;" that program decisions were made on the basis of resource availability rather than on the basis of student and school needs. The superintendent felt that programs should drive the budget rather than the other way around.

2. **Potential**

Cambridge embarked on a strategic planning process based on the belief that a common vision of the future can:

- Get people excited, enthused and united.
- Align activities and efforts at all levels of the school system.
- Promote creativity. Good program ideas can come from anywhere in the system.

3. **Impact**

The key-results planning process, using building level and system level plans, provided the framework for good program ideas to emerge from all levels of the system.

Some results of the Cambridge "key results" process were:

- Better communication with the community. "Key results" were tied to community expectations.
- Decentralized decision making. The focus shifted away from "**who**" made the decision to:
  - Was it a "**good**" decision?
  - Did it produce the desired **results?**
  - Was it **aligned** with the guiding **vision** of the future?
- The school system applied for grants because they helped to accomplish desired results rather than just because they were available.
- The search and identification of community resources became more focused, leading to more support from the business community.
- Thinking in terms of results led the system to begin developing indicators of student

performance/progress that did not rely exclusively on test scores.

- The system developed a closer alignment between its mission and its administrative practices.

APPENDIX

Brief Biographies of Speakers

and

Colloquium Presenters

Dr. Jerome T. Murphy, Associate Dean, Harvard Graduate School of Education, has published numerous studies on educational reform and has consulted to the Connecticut, Florida, and Wisconsin State Legislatures, as well as the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. Dr. Murphy has, for more than two decades, conducted organizational studies of educational reform, including several cross-national studies.

Dr. Irwin Blumer, Superintendent, Newton Public Schools, formerly Superintendent of the Concord-Carlisle Public Schools and chairperson of the M.A.S.S. Committee that produced a 1987 Position Paper on "School Culture and the Superintendent." Dr. Blumer has made presentations before the Association of METCO Directors, the Fall River School System Administrators' Workshop, and was twice an invited speaker at the National Conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Dr. Peter J. Negroni, Superintendent, Springfield Public Schools and formerly Superintendent of Community School District 12, Bronx, New York. In Springfield, he has initiated, "Blueprint for Excellence," a systemwide restructuring effort. Dr. Negroni has also served as an Adjunct Associate Professor at Lenoir Rhyne College, the College of New Rochelle, and City College of New York.

Lyle Kirtman, President of Future Management Systems, Inc., specializes in strategic planning, and has consulted with over 140 organizations, including more than 20 Massachusetts school systems on the development of a strategic plan. In addition, he has consulted with the Governor's Task Force on Education and Technology in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, facilitated the strategic planning process for the Executive Office of Economic Affairs in Massachusetts, and has consulted on organizational development and planning issues for both Digital Equipment Corporation and Polaroid.

Oliver S. Brown, Senior Management Consultant, Municipal and School Business Officials Cooperative Corporation, has consulted on financial restructuring with school systems in Massachusetts, New York, Maine, Ohio and Indiana. Mr. Brown also served for almost two decades as Assistant, and then Deputy, Superintendent for Planning and Management of the Cambridge Public Schools. He has served as Superintendent of the Addison-Rutland Union School District in Vermont and is a part time instructor on financial management at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.